

**The Sabbath of Yom Kippur — A Sermon by Rabbi Harold M.  
Schulweis**

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Rabbi Schulweis: If someone is travelling in the desert and he forgot which day it was. He forgot which day was the Sabbath. What should he do? He should count six days from the day that he remembered that he had made a mistake, that he doesn't know, and then, whenever the seventh day comes, he should sanctify it.

When Rabbi Elimelech and Rabbi Zusha heard this particular law, they were very, very disturbed because they wanted to know whether or not the Sabbath, which they observed, was holy because of the fact that the celebrated the Sabbath on, in fact, the seventh day or whether it had nothing to do with the seventh day. It was a pure subjective manner. Was it the day itself that introduces its holiness or was it their own intention?

And so they went to the Rabbi of Mezeritch. And the Rabbi of Mezeritch said, "I tell you, you want to test this question whether or not that's the Sabbath Day itself that makes something holy or something else. Why don't you test the matter? Make the Sabbath on a weekday. Make it, for example, on Tuesday night so that Erev Shabbos air on Wednesday. And then, you will see what will happen."

So, on Tuesday they prepared for the Sabbath. And they spread the Sabbath tablecloth, and they put on Sabbath clothes and fur caps, and they lit the candles, and they recited the Kiddush, and after the meal they recited the Z'mirot; the Birkat, the grace, and then the Z'mirot, and then they spoke words of Torah, and on the Sabbath, they got up early as always. It happen to be Wednesday but they Daven, Shacharit, Mincha, Ma'ariv, Musaf, and the end of Wednesday they recited the Havdalah, and they looked at each other with trepidation because they had indeed experienced Kedushah. It was Wednesday and they experienced Shabbos, Kedushah on Wednesday.

So, they went off to consult the famous Sage of Mezeritch and they told him of their experiment. And he said to them, "Children, do not fear for the preparation of the heart, your kavanah, your intentionality, has the true

power to draw the light of the Sabbath holiness down to earth," because Shabbos is not a matter of a luach, a calendar. It's a matter of ruach. It's a matter of spirit. You have to understand that Sabbath has to be made from which we get the expression in Yiddish, *machen Shabbos*. You have to make the Sabbath because the Sabbath is not a matter of astronomy. It's not a matter of looking out and seeing whether or not the sun set, whether the stars has appeared. The Sabbath is the way we think, the way we believe, the way we deal with time.

Now, I must tell you, when I was growing up in my grandfather's house especially, the Sabbath was a wet blanket. It was a puritanical litany of prohibited joys and prescriptions, and negations that inhibited all of the joys, all of the spontaneity, all of the creativity, and all the fun. For me, the Sabbath was a day in which I couldn't. I couldn't. I couldn't travel. I couldn't play the radio. I couldn't pay a paper.

And I certainly -- and especially when daylight saving times came, it destroyed the whole notion of the Saturday night date. See, it so happens that I hated daylight saving time because all of my girlfriends -- I lived in the Bronx. They were all in Brooklyn. So, it meant -- you understand how it is wait until it's permissible. Then, they take the IRT and the BMT. But God is good because my *basherta* lived in the Bronx and that's how it happened.

But the truth of the matter is, I have often thought, why is there such a terrible obsession with not working? Not working, never can work, as I grew older I realized that you can't work. Not on Shabbos, you can't work on Rosh Hashanah, on Yom Kippur, on Pesach, on *Sukkos*, and *Shovous*. Why do you have to have so many prohibitions against work? First of all, who wants to work? Why should there be such prohibitions? And yet, if you have so many prohibitions, it means that people -- and that's the secret I want to tell you about.

The secret is, that people want to work, desperately want to work. And I don't mean simply six days. They want to work all seven days because they're afraid of not working. And that, I suspect, is one of the things that the bible was aware of. People are afraid of the Sabbath because slaves are afraid of freedom. Slaves are afraid of free time. If I have free time, what shall I fill it with? If I have free time, with whom shall I spend it?

Nothing frightens in our society, human beings more, than the day without a schedule, without instruction, without deadlines, without orders. Of

course, I know what people say because they say it to me all the time. They complain that they don't have enough time for their family and for their friends, but left with 24 hours of unstructured time, they are very uneasy because freedom, Sabbath, is no joy and no release, and no freedom.

Psychological and sociological literature is filled with evidence of this odd phobia. The fear of weekends, of relaxation, of vacations, of retirement, of leisure. The dread of having one day away from the office. The dread of having a day in which Wall Street is closed produces in what many psychologists including Sandor Ferenczi and Karl Abraham called Sunday Neurosis. It's a sort of Shabbat *Malez*, and not a few psychologist have written about the mounting tension experienced by successful people.

I know everybody talks about leisure, leisure, leisure. But if you look at the words that we used, the etymology of the words like leisure, relaxation, and other things, you will find that it's not -- it's highly overrated. Webster's dictionary defines leisure as "freedom provided by cessation of activities, engagement, or responsibility." But that's negative. What I want is activity. What I want is engagement. What I want is involvement.

You see, there is no active verb for leisure. It can't say I'm going to leash. It can't be done. Why can't you do that? Because leisure is a static noun. The same thing applies to that wonderful word vacation, which, as you know, means to vacate. It means to be empty. It means to be unoccupied, but that's precisely the vacuum that I fear. And relaxation, the definition is an absence or reduction of muscle retention, but that's flexibility.

Retirement comes from the word in French, *retraite*, which means to withdraw leisure, vacation, retirement, relaxation. All of these things are anxiety-provoking, to have time on your hands, to have to kill time, to be bored. Soren Kierkegaard wrote a very interesting statement. He said, "Boredom is the root of all evil." And we know how children go crazy when they are bored. We are children.

Sigmund Freud called work -- I say this in reverence. He's one of our greats. Sigmund Freud called work and love the parents of human civilization. But in our time, it is not love, but work, that is the cheapest joy. And I read as you have read, social psychologists who have noted that in America, especially, people are working more.

I read economist Juliet Schor's wonderful book called *The Overworked American*. And she informs us that in the last two decades, the average worker has added on an extra 164 hours a month of work to the work year. Vacations, she writes, have shortened by 14% and parental time available to children per week has fallen 10 hours in the white household.

So, that's not surprising. Of course, you'll say the reason that people are working more is it's getting tougher and tougher to make a living. But the significant thing of all of these studies is that men and women prefer to work than to be at home. They prefer business to home.

In this wonderful book which was a bestseller for a while called *The Time Bind* by Arlie Russell Hochschild, she says that there is a profound reversal in the psyche of our times. Men and women both prefer the workplace to the home not because the new economy demands it, not because they need to, because they want to work. There is a competition for time between home and the workplace, and the workplace is winning. Why? Because work is more interesting than home, because work is more rewarding emotionally.

In the work place in these interviews are fantastic. They all write that one feels more appreciated in work, greater self-esteem, more camaraderie than at home. The workplace is an escape from home. For men and for women, the workplace is an escape from unwashed dishes, unresolved quarrels, crying tots, and testy adolescents, and unresponsive mates.

Women report that preparing the gourmet meal, that washing and feeding the family, in no way compares to the satisfaction, to the recognition, to the bolstering of self-esteem, and to the respect that you receive in the office. This is true of all people including intellectuals.

Kay Hamod, the historian, writes, "I love scholarly work because you force a manuscript into shape. It's not like sitting alone for nine months waiting for something to happen with you." I understand this lady. Mothering does not yield a raise or a promotion, or a bonus, or a gold watch. Mothering means to be yelled at, to be abruptly awakened at night, to be urinated on, to repeatedly clean up spilled cereal, and much more. Now, I am struck by this because I think this is something very, very intriguing about us, the reversal of our psyches.

Yesterday, books were written with titles such as *Home is the Haven from a Heartless World*. Not today. Today, it should be entitled *The Office is the*

Haven from a Heartless World. Yesterday, we used to spoof about the factory and about efficiency, and about speed, and scheduling. In my youth, there was one movie that I loved more than any other. I never told you about this. Now, I confess to you on Yom Kippur, it was Charlie Chaplin's Modern Times. I don't know how many of you saw it. It's a wonderful, wonderful satiric insight into the technological, industrial world of the late 1930s.

You remember that the important thing is that you've got to save time. In order to save time, the manufacturers, the factory people introduced the J. Willicomb Billows Feeding Machine. The intention is that workers shouldn't have to stop for work for lunch and for waste time. So, they were fed with a technological device such as the revolving plate with an automatic food pusher in your face, an automatic soup plate with a compressed air blower so the workers wouldn't have to stop to cool the soup by blowing in it with their lips. There was a corn feeder with buttered corn on the cob moving back and forth horizontally. All the while, while Charlie Chaplin is having this in his mouth, he is busy tightening bolts. And there is a sanitation hydro-compressed sterilized mouth wiper that would keep him clean. And all of these for the sake of efficiency.

And we laughed and we laughed, and we laughed. That was not a movie that we'd go over today. It has to be a new movie. And we have a lot of directors and a lot of people who are writing scripts and I want to give you the script. Script is, the Billows Feeding machine used to hurry the worker. But now, it's the mother that hurries the child.

The efficiency culture of work has taken over that of the home in a revealing advertising by Quaker Oatmeal. I have no interest in Quaker Oatmeal. But as a working mother that feeds her child in just under 90 seconds, the smiling mother who, in the advertisement, name is given as Sherri Greenberg, holds a four-and-a-half-year old Nicky in her arms. And in the ad is this wonderful line, "Nicky is a very picky eater. With instant Quaker Oatmeal, I can give him a terrific hot breakfast in just 90 seconds and I don't have to spend any time coaxing him to eat it." And the ad concludes, "Instant Quaker oatmeal for Moms who have a lot of love, but not a lot of time."

This is a very important phenomenon. This is a sociologically fantastic. Psychologically and spiritually, it's mind blowing. Time has been drained from out of the home for the sake of the workplace so that we now have a

modern technology two-minute rice, five-minute chicken casserole, seven-minute Chinese feasts, fast foods for fast love.

And Hallmark cards which really represents the real poetry. The poetry and the mindset mass culture have now -- are now written by very contemporary shrewd observers of a contemporary scene. There are a number of ingenious Hallmark cards available for busy parents. One of them is to be placed on the bed for the child. It reads, "Sorry, I can't be there to tuck you in." But she cared enough to get the very best. Another card is put on the breakfast table. It says, "Sorry, I can't say good morning."

But ladies and gentlemen, this is the Sabbath. This is the Sabbath that falls on Yom Kippur and it cleared that I have to talk about the Sabbath. And now, I begin to understand the centrality of the Sabbath which I really did not understand when I was in Masada's house. Why, for example, do you think in the midst of the 10 commandments, right, which deal with "Thou shalt not lust, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not covet, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not worship other gods, is there a fourth commandment saying thou shalt remember the Sabbath?

And tomorrow when to come to Shul to hear the Haftarah from Isaiah, it's a remarkable statement. The prophet is saying, "What is this fast for? It's not to bring animals. It is for something else. It's for promise and salvation." And then it concludes with something that I never noticed. "If you refrain," says the prophet, "from trampling the Sabbath, from pursuing your business on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and call the holy day honorable, if you honor it and go not to your own ways nor look to your own affairs, nor pursue your business, nor speak thereof, then shalt thou delight in the Lord, and I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob."

Why is the Sabbath so important to the prophetic tradition that is concerned with morality? What is the Sabbath doing in the 10 Commandments? The Sabbath is a cry for sanity. It's a cry for freedom from this omnivorous monster that eats at our soul and that robs us of our family, and of our softness, and of our friends.

Judaism is not anti-business. It never said that business is the culprit. It never said either work or Shabbos -- that would be either/or -- no, it says both end. It says, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord." It pleads for some degree of

independence from the store, from the office, from the culture of commerce, from the adulation of commodity, from frenetic restlessness.

It doesn't say that you should not work. It simply says, "One day, I want you to ask for a truce, an armistice for the sake of your liberation." Because your calendar is the most important thing. You know what the very first law -- and again, I didn't know this until I saw it this way -- the very first law that is given in the Book of Exodus for the slaves who are freed is to make for themselves a calendar because slaves have no calendar of their own. Only free men can have a liberated time.

There are invisible chains which have surreptitiously embraced us in the culture of the workplace. And that culture is a culture, and it's a tough culture. It's a hard culture. It's a competitive culture. And it's not easy, and understand it very well, to work that hard and to be so ambitious, and then to come home and suddenly to become a pussy cat, a sweet lovable individual. The seduction of work has drained us of our poetry, of softness, of intimacy, and of joy.

In this same psychologists whom I've read that deals so much with the question of work, they write that for tens of thousands of people, this kind of enslavement to the ambition of work produces in people anhedonia. It's a wonderful phrase. Anhedonia. It means the inability to rejoice with the joys of intimacy.

The obsessiveness of work, of career, of success, has brought a terrible, terrible truce upon us and the Sabbath is a cry for *Mishpocha*, for the resurrection of the family, because the modern table is filled with food and delicacies, and drinks, but it is bare of laughter, and of song, and of conversation. The contemporary family eats less and less together, less and less time is spent, sings less and less, prays less and less even on the Sabbath.

Now, when I talk about the Sabbath, I'm sure you think, "Rabbi is going to come up with, "Why don't you keep Shabbos? Why don't you put on candles? Why don't you do the Kiddush?" The Sabbath is not just a matter of ritual. It is a matter of relationship. This is not simply a rabbi's plea for more ritual. Because when you light candles or you recite the Kiddush with a challah, more is asked for you than to know the words and to know the words, and to know the motions.

When the table talk is business and talk of business, and of making of deals, and of the killing in the market, then the challah turns hard and dry. These two loaves of challah are there for a purpose. Not to make the bakery richer. There are two loaves there because on the Sabbath, the people who are gifted with manna from heaven, so that on Friday they had twice as much loaves, so they would not have to go out into the field and work on Shabbat. But the people did not listen that they hoarded it, they multiplied it, and those who gathered more than they needed, the manna would rot. And the manna bread worms, "*vayarum tolaim vayivash.*"

So, the two loaves of the Challah are made for you to pay attention to each other, to have a conversation, and have a certain kind of a talk. I don't mean the kind of talk that I hear reflected in the television sets that you hear in the situation comedies, the same family situations. They're always, whether is Roseanne, or whether it's married with/without children, whatever it is, whatever the program is, they are full of wise cracks. They are full of the demeaning, the deprecation. It's full of one's downmanship.

When the table talk speaks of children and ask them only about their grades and their marks, and their tests, and then registers disappointment and criticism, but speaks nothing to the child about his or her dreams or hopes, if that happens, then the Kiddush, no matter how sweet the wine, turns sour. Shabbos is for love. That's what it's for. It's for love.

Look at my tradition. "He shall not kindle fire throughout your habitations," say the Rabbis. To kindle fire doesn't mean to kindle fire? It means you shall not have rage in your heart. You shall not have anger in your heart. It means you shall not shout to each other. The Sabbath is a call for balance, for homeostasis, for equilibrium. It's a modest call to correct. We're going crazy. We're going nuts.

One day out of seven, create a fence, a wall, a barrier to keep out the culture of business and its toughness, and its hardness, and its shrewdness. The word Shabbos means one thing. It means stop. It means close your pocketbook. One day out of seven, liberate "In God we trust" from the dollar bill and put it into your life. One day out of seven put aside your wallet.

One day in seven halt the machine. One day out of seven, leave commerce outside of your life. Do not shop. Do not go to the beauty parlor because you want a different kind of permanent wave than that which is in your hair.

One day out of seven, fellow computer experts, disconnect your fax and your email, and your computers, and your internets, and www.com, and start communicating with those you love. Don't just squeeze that mouse. Hug your children. Is it harder? You bet it's harder. Just once, one day out of seven, don't download. Uplift.

One night out of seven, you turn off your television set not as a punishment, but that you can learn to look at each other. Look at your wife. Look at your husband. Look at your children. Listen to their sounds. One day out of seven, don't act so tired that you have no patience to talk to each other, that you have no patience to listen and to love body and soul, physically and emotionally.

Are we so trapped, dear friends, that only others can entertain us? Are you lost without Oprah? Are you lost without Leno and without Letterman? Have you no [inaudible][0:29:52] in yourselves? Can you not entertain yourselves? Can only celebrities sing and not you? Are we so empty that we cannot entertain ourselves even for one day?

Dear friends, it's an addiction. Sabbath is a challenge to the deepest addiction. An addict is somebody who can't say no, who can't break the compulsion. The world of the business, the world of -- has different talents. However refined, the culture of the work is full of aggression. Listen to the vocabulary. Listen to the metaphors that we use. I made a killing. Wow. He worked him over. He gave him the business. I love sinking my teeth in it.

The very interesting section the bible says, "You shall not pursue business on the Sabbath nor speak of this." So, the Talmud asked, "So, what can you talk about?" What's there less to talk about? And here's what they say. This is in the Shabbat 150a. Gomorrah says, "One may determine charity grants to the poor on the Sabbath.

One may supervise matters of life and death, of communal urgency on the Sabbath. One may go to the synagogues to attend to communal affairs on the Sabbath. One may make arrangements on the Sabbath for the betrothal of young girls and one may provide elementary education of a child, and teach him a trade on the Sabbath. For when Isaiah said, "Nor finding your own affairs nor speaking your own words," this means "*Heftzecha asurim. Heftzay shamayim mutarim.*" The affairs of heaven are permitted. It's your business affairs that are forbidden."

The Sabbath is for Teshuvah and the rabbis love this word, Teshuvah, Taf, Shin, Vav, Bet, Hei, which, if you turn the letters around, makes out Hashabbat because you can create a world, you can form our own world, you can transform your own lives because on the Sabbath, you can become sane again.

Is it so -- forgive me if I make these statements. Is it so heroic to say that "You know, I'm going to come home earlier on Friday night with some flowers"? Is it so heroic to silence the ubiquitous beeper? Is it so strange that a Havurah, which is the group of families, should not decide perhaps to meet once a month to celebrate the Sabbath with our children and our grandchildren in food, in song, in prayer, in friendship?

When you leave the Shul tonight, you don't have to rush you out. Don't go too fast because you will find somewhere -- I have looked at it and *your hopefully* musician was there. We have prepared for you a wonderful tape. We means, Cantor Fox, me, Rabbi Feinstein, Jay Levy. We prepared the tape from the beginning of the lighting of the candles to the end of the Havdalah with commentaries.

And you will hear wonderful voices. The good voice belongs to Hershel, but in the background, you will hear that we were so inspired when he began to sing *Z'miroth* that we joined him. That's a wonderful tape and it's for you. It's our gift. But that's not to please going to do it, but the way, because it's going to tell you how to do the Kiddush, what the words that'll be translated, there's also a little transliteration, there's a whole pamphlet, but you're going to have to do it.

Dear souls, I tell you a story that always has meant a great deal to me. Rabbi Eizik, the son of Yechiel of Krakow, after years of poverty dreamed that there was a treasure. The treasure was in Prague. It was under a bridge which leads to the king's palace. And when the dream repeated itself over and over again, he took did Rabbi Eizik his shovel and began to dig.

And the captain of the guard in Prague asked him what he was doing there. And Eizik told him the dream. Then, the Captain laughed. "This is funny. I also had a dream and my dream was to go to Krakow to dig up a treasure under the stove of a man called Rabbi Eizik." And Eizik heard the captain and understood, and he went home to Krakow, and he dug up the treasure from under the stove."

And we, dear friends, are looking for treasures. We are looking for panaceas. We are looking for salvation. We are looking for therapy in somebody else's territory, in other faiths, in other traditions, but it's here. It's here where you live and where you stand. And when you leave the synagogue, it's in your homes. There's a treasure there. Take back control of your life. Don't let the workplace drain you of your humanity. Don't let success, career -- and I speak not to you, I speak to me. All of these talks are autobiographical. The Sabbath is your time. The home is your place. The treasure awaits your discovery. Don't look too far. Shabbat Shalom. Good Shabbos.